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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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Press Service



WASHINGTON, D. C.

RELEASE FOR PUBLICATION
WEDNESDAY, OCTOBER 7, 1936

THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

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THE HONEY CROP

From Alaska to Arabia, from Australia to the Andes -- throughout the temperate and tropic zones, and for centuries past -- man has kept bees to supply him with honey. Until sugar came into world-wide use at lower cost, honey was the principal sweet food of most countries in Europe and Asia, as it was of the new colonies in the Americas.

The Belgian writer, Maeterlinck, in his book, "The Life of the Bee", described the wonderfully interesting, orderly processes that result in this delicious product, so widely prized for its distinctive flavor and delicate sweetness. The bee colony makes the honey from start to finish. Bees collect the nectar of a great variety of flowers, modify it, and store it in combs in their hives. At certain seasons, the beekeeper removes the surplus honey in the wax combs and leaves a portion as winter food for the bee colony. This honey taken from the hives may be sold just as it is, in combs or sections cut from the combs, but the commoner practice is to strain it or extract it by centrifugal force, somewhat as cream is separated. It is then bottled in convenient sized containers, such as glass jars, small pails, or larger quantities for bakeries, candy makers, or other wholesale users.

Differences in flavor and color between one kind of honey and another are due to the kind of flowers from which the bees got the nectar. Sweet clover, white and alsike clovers, and alfalfa are the chief sources of honey in the United States. The important commercial honeys come mostly from the clovers or clover blends. Blending two or more honeys insures greater uniformity of color, flavor, and consistency, during different seasons and from year to year.

In addition to the clover and alfalfa honeys, other distinctly flavored honeys come from the south, where the tupelo trees, orange blossoms and cotton blossoms supply the nectar, or from wild sage in California, star-thistle on the Pacific Coast, buckwheat, mesquite and fireweed. Which kind of honey you prefer is a matter of personal taste.

Grades and color standards for honey have been set up by the U. S. Department of Agriculture. The use of these grades is optional, but a great many honey dealers find them an assurance of quality to their customers. There are seven color classifications: Water white, extra white, white, extra light amber, light amber, amber, and dark. The grades of honey are independent of color. Those for extracted honey are based on freeness from foreign matter, and those for comb-section honey on finish and whiteness of the cappings. All honey going into interstate commerce must be stamped with its net weight as required by the Federal pure-food laws, and must be pure honey as defined by the Food and Drug Administration. The buyer who finds either extracted or comb honey of pleasing color and flavor labeled U. S. Fancy or U. S. No. 1 may be reasonably sure of a good product.

The honey crop this fall, according to the Bureau of Agricultural Economics, will probably be about the same in quantity as in 1935, although the honey season as a whole has been unusual. First there was a shortage of bees, due to the heavy losses by freezing last winter. This loss was partially made up by package bees shipped from the South. Then at the beginning of the blossoming season there seemed to be more nectar available than in years. Sweet clover, white clover and alsike clover were all abundant. - - - - -

The bees, though fewer in number, were vigorous and availed themselves well of the supply of nectar. It looked as if there would be the heaviest honey crop in 8 or 10 years, when the drought came. In the drought areas not only was the clover affected, but the great heat prevented the bees from flying in the middle of the day, and the heat actually melted the wax in many combs. In other sections, however, sweet clover and alfalfa bloomed fairly well, and after the August rains, other nectar plants came into blossom. Goldenrod, heartsease, and asters all helped the late fall flow of honey and brought up the average for the country as a whole.

The quality of this year's honey is exceptionally fine in spite of these difficulties. Most beekeepers in the northern tier of states report plenty of white to water-white honey, heavy in body, and of unusually good flavor. The great demand for honey and the lack of "carry-over" from 1935 have given beekeepers a little higher wholesale price than last year, and this indicates an upward price trend for the retail consumer also. Although much of the extracted honey is used in the household, for a bread spread, for sweetening beverages and desserts, for making sauces, and in cooked foods, many bakers are using honey for special breads and cakes. Candy makers, too, feature honey nougats, honey caramels, honey-nut chocolate bars, Turkish paste, and other confections. The honey takes the place of part or all of the sugar or of the corn sirup needed to control crystallization.

Honey is composed largely of two simple sugars - levulose or fruit sugar, and dextrose, or grape sugar. Both of these sugars, and consequently honey, can be easily assimilated by the body. In moderate amounts, honey is a wholesome addition to the list of sweets. It may be used in place of sugar in modifying a baby's milk. It is not an important source of minerals, although it contains small amounts of iron, calcium, and phosphorous. It has no detectable vitamin value.

The characteristic flavor depends on aromatic substances in the nectar of various flowers.

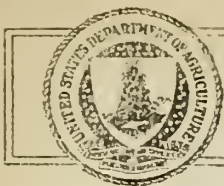
Extracted honey has about one-fifth less energy value than an equal weight of sugar because it is about one-fifth water. This water content affects the amount of liquid used in a recipe when honey is substituted for sugar. The liquid must be reduced, however, more than the difference between the water content of the honey and the dry sugar, according to the consistency of the honey and also according to the proportion of honey used. For example, if medium-thick honey is substituted for one-half the sugar in cake or quick-bread recipes, reduce the liquid one-fourth. If honey is substituted for all the sugar, reduce the liquid one-half. If honey is very thin or very thick, this proportion may have to be altered.

In making honey cakes and quick breads, mix the honey with the liquid called for in the recipe, and bake at the lowest temperature possible. This prevents loss or change of flavor of the honey and also avoids too rapid browning.

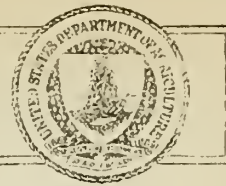
Honey has much the same consistency as molasses and may be used in place of it, measure for measure, in gingerbread, brown bread, and steamed puddings. Because it contains less acid than molasses soda is not needed. Add 1 teaspoon of baking powder for each $1/4$ teaspoon of soda omitted.

The fact that honey takes up moisture rapidly is sometimes an advantage and sometimes not. Fruit cakes, steamed puddings, cookies and candies, stay moist longer if made with honey. But some confections and frostings, if made with honey, will remain soft and take up more moisture if the air is humid. This may make them too soft and sticky to be attractive.

Honey should be stored in a dry place. Low temperatures may cause the honey to become partly cloudy or partially crystallized. Most honey crystallize on aging. Crystallized honey can easily be liquefied by warming the container in moderately hot water (not above 140°F.). Higher temperatures injure both the flavor and color of honey.



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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

FOWLS ARE A GOOD FALL BUY

All kinds of chickens are plentiful in the markets just now, the Bureau of Agricultural Economics says, and they are selling at prices from three to six cents a pound less than last fall, depending on the class of bird and local market conditions. The poultry offered on the retail counter includes not only birds from commercial producers, but many farm-raised chickens, too. This is because most of the hens more than a year old,--fowls, as the trade calls them--are unprofitable boarders if a farmer has to buy feed to carry the home flock through the winter. They do not lay enough eggs to pay their way. So they go to market in the fall, while they are plump and meaty. Thus they increase the general supply of poultry to the advantage of the consumer's pocketbook.

Birds of fowl size and age are a thrifty buy, because they have the largest proportion of meat to bony structure. They require long slow cooking with liquid added to make them tender--that is, stewing, or simmering, or braising, or cooking in a casserole. By good management a large stewing chicken can sometimes be made to stretch over two meals.

Some poultry dealers always carry Government graded chickens. Others stock them from time to time, especially if their trade demands graded poultry.

In selecting chickens at the store the housewife may not find Government grades marked on the individual birds, because the custom is to stamp these grades on the box or barrel which the customer does not see.

For each class of poultry -- broilers, fryers, roasters, fowls, and so on, there is a separate set of specifications under each of the four grades. The top grade, "U. S. Special", or "U. S. Grade AA" is not often seen. "U. S. Grade A" or "U. S. Prime", and "U. S. Grade B" or "U. S. Choice" are the grades commonly offered the housewife at retail markets. The difference between Grade A and Grade B is chiefly one of degree of fleshing, appearance, and minor surface defects, such as pinfeathers or a slightly crooked breastbone, which does not affect the eating quality.

Some dealers have facilities for keeping live chickens on hand, dressing them from day to day as ordered. This is "fresh-killed" poultry. Others handle fresh-dressed poultry that has been frozen only long enough to allow it to be carried in good condition to market. The term "fresh-chilled" is used for these birds. A great deal of the poultry in large city markets is necessarily fresh-chilled or it could not be handled. Hard frozen or cold storage chickens are still another kind on the market. Recent improvement in methods of hard freezing many kinds of foods includes chickens, and consumers are getting over their doubts as to the merits of storage and frozen foods.

In several western states where individual freezer-lockers are in wide use among farm families, many a housewife is sending her surplus home-dressed hens to the family locker, along with other meats. Other farm housewives prefer to conserve their nonlaying hens for the winter table in jars or tins. The new bulletin on home canning recently issued by the Bureau of Home Economics has a section devoted to the canning of chicken. The canning specialists recommend the steam pressure canner as the only safe method of processing either meats or chicken. (This bulletin is No. 1762-F, and is free for the asking as long as the supply lasts.)

The city housewife who hasn't the facilities either to freeze or can a home-grown supply of chicken, has to depend on buying her poultry at retail, judging its quality to the best of her ability. If she selects a four or five pound fowl, she must bear in mind that when it is drawn and ready to cook it will weigh about 25 percent less than it did on the dealer's scales, and that the actual weight of meat, when taken from the bones, will be even less. Nevertheless, if she simmers it carefully in lightly salted water until it is tender, she may be able to serve one half of it as a fricassee or chicken pie, and then use the remainder, removed from the bones, for chicken shortcake, chicken a la King, chicken with noodles, or one of the mined chicken dishes such as chicken rizotto, chop suey, chicken timbales, chicken croquettes, or a curry. The broth will make fine gravy and will be useful in any one of these dishes.

Another good way of cooking an older bird is in a casserole, with a tight lid, in which it gets long slow moist cooking, chiefly by the steam kept in by the cover. The juices are retained in the gravy and the seasonings penetrate the pieces of chicken, giving them a fine flavor. Here's a recipe for a casserole of chicken, vouched for by the Bureau of Home Economics:

Casserole of Fowl with Vegetables

3 carrots	2 tablespoons butter or other fat
1 bunch celery	1 cup hot water
1 onion	1 cup milk
1 green pepper	1-1/2 tablespoons flour
4 or 5 pound fowl	

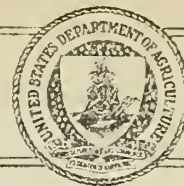
Slice or chop the vegetables in very small pieces. Cut up the fowl, season with salt and pepper, dust with flour, and brown delicately in the fat. As the meat is removed from the frying pan, place it in a casserole. Pour the chopped vegetables into the frying pan and let them absorb the browned fat. Then transfer them to the casserole, add a cup of hot water, cover, and cook in a slow oven (275°F.) for 3 hours--or longer if the fowl is tough. Add more water from time to time if necessary. Just before serving, remove the pieces of fowl, and add the milk and flour, which have been mixed. Cook for 10 minutes longer and pour the vegetable sauce over the chicken, or replace the chicken in the sauce and serve from the casserole.



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THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

PLENTY OF ONIONS

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The test of a good cook, someone has said, lies in her seasonings. And this might almost be taken to mean whether or not she is skillful in her use of onions, knowing how to add them sparingly for some dishes, lavishly for others. A glance through any cook book reveals a "soupcon", as the French say, or a suspicion of onion in many a soup, stew, hash, and hors-d'oeuvres -- in every course up to dessert. There's even an old-fashioned concoction called onion pie.

Then there are the scores of good ways of cooking the onions themselves as one of the vegetables in a well-rounded meal. Baked, boiled, creamed, stuffed, fried, in combination with many other foods--^{from} peanuts to apples--from lamb to liver--onions are good. It's no wonder the Israelites in the wilderness complained to Moses for lack of them, or that O. Henry and other writers have built stories about them. Americans are credited with eating about 10 pounds of onions per capita a year.

So it is cheering news that the Bureau of Agricultural Economics brings in its October crop report. Onions did not suffer during the past season from the freezes or drought that reduced the supply of many other vegetables and fruits, the crop reporters say. This year's onion production is unusually large, and the price of onions will probably not get high throughout the early winter.

Nearly twelve million sacks of 100 pounds each are in prospect from the late crop. Many of these onions are larger sized than is usual for the Yellow Globe type raised in the north and east. Both New York and Michigan have about twice their usual crop of late onions. Indiana, Ohio, and Minnesota are contributing their share of the globe type. These onions are sharper and stronger in flavor than the mild sweet Spanish or Valencia type onions produced in Colorado, Utah, Idaho, and Washington, but they are almost as large and can be used in many of the same ways.

Before onions are sold in wholesale quantities, they are graded for size, maturity, firmness and shape, and percentage of defects. Bright, clean, hard, well shaped, mature onions with dry skins are usually of good quality. In selecting onions in a store, avoid those that have begun to sprout, or in which the seed-stem has developed, or that show signs of rot, especially if they are moist at the neck. Onions that have a brown stain on the outer skin are not necessarily injured if they are hard and dry. Much of the stain will disappear when the outer layers are peeled off. Misshapen onions are sometimes wasteful to prepare, but otherwise perfectly edible.

When it comes to food value and their place in a well-rounded diet, onions supply some minerals, and some vitamins B and C when eaten raw in sandwiches or salads. Like other vegetables they add useful bulk. But after all it is more for flavor than for food value that we eat onions.

The larger sizes are very good stuffed with a mixture of bread crumbs, nuts, celery and seasonings, after a preliminary cooking to make them tender. They may also be baked whole, or cut up and scalloped or creamed.

The smaller sized onions, often brown-skinned, are ordinarily selected for mincing to season such dishes as meat loaf, milk-vegetable soups, or hash. Part of the forecast made by the Bureau of Agricultural Economics indicates that large-

sized onions will be more plentiful this fall than smaller ones. So if you are cutting a large onion for seasoning, wrap the cut piece in waxed paper, and it will keep for a day or two in a cool place. Don't put it into the refrigerator to lend its "aroma" to other foods, though, unless it is in a covered jar.

The standard method of introducing onion flavor into a soup or sauce is to cook a tablespoon or more of chopped onion in the butter or other fat until it is tender and transparent, then stir in the flour, and finally the liquid, and cook until the raw starch flavor disappears. Cooking the onion in fat before it is used in any mixture gives a richer, better flavor.

High on the list of good dishes made with onions, an epicure would place onion soup — sent to the table with a slice of toast generously sprinkled with grated cheese in each bowlful. That's the substantial finish. For the start, first cook sliced onions, plenty of them, in fat until they turn yellow. Then add meat broth and simmer slowly until the onions are tender and the soup is the right consistency to serve.

Onion item No. 2 on an epicure's list would probably be French fried onions. The large mild onions on the market this fall are perfect for the purpose. Slice them crosswise, about a third of an inch thick, and separate the rings. Dip these into a thin batter, and fry them like potato chips in deep fat. If there are any left over, you can keep them crisp for several days in a container with a tight lid.

A particularly savory and seasonable combination, with forequarter cuts of lamb reasonable in price, is roast breast of lamb with baked onions stuffed with forcemeat, utilizing the lean trimmed from the foreshank. The Bureau of Home Economics gives the following recipe:

ROAST BREAST OF LAMB AND STUFFED ONIONS

Select a breast of lamb including the foreshank. Have the butcher crack the bones of the breast so that it can be carved between the ribs. Wipe the meat with a damp cloth, remove the foreshank, cut off the meat, and grind it for the forcemeat stuffing. Make a pocket by cutting through the flesh close to the ribs and sprinkle the inside with salt and pepper. Pile in the hot forcemeat stuffing lightly, and

sew the edges together. Rub the outside with salt, pepper, and flour.

Lay the stuffed breast, ribs down, on a rack in an open roasting pan. Do not add water. Place the roast in a hot oven (480° F.), and sear for 30 minutes. If there is not sufficient fat to keep the meat from drying out, baste with melted fat, or lay a strip or two of bacon on top. After searing, reduce the oven temperature rapidly to 300° F., and continue the cooking in the open pan until the meat is tender. Or keep the oven at 375° F. for the entire time. The total time required will probably be one and one-half to one and three-fourths hours. If there is more stuffing than the breast will hold, bake it in a separate dish, or use it as a stuffing for onions to serve with the meat. Serve with brown gravy made from the drippings.

For the baked onions, choose a large, mild-flavored variety. Cut the onions in half crosswise and simmer in lightly salted water until about half done. Lift the onions out and arrange in a baking dish. Remove the centers without disturbing the outer layers. Chop the onion centers and add to the forcemeat stuffing. Fill the onion shells with this mixture, cover, and bake in a moderate oven for about one-half hour, or until the onions are tender. Remove the cover from the baking dish during the last of the cooking so that the onions will brown well on top. Serve with the roast lamb.

The ingredients for the forcemeat stuffing are as follows:

Ground lean meat from the foreshank of lamb	Chopped onion
2 cups fine dry bread crumbs	1/4 teaspoon savory seasoning
2 tablespoons fat	1 teaspoon salt
1/2 cup chopped celery and parsley	1/8 teaspoon pepper

Melt the butter in a skillet, add the celery and onion, and cook for two or three minutes. Add the ground meat, and stir until the juice evaporates and the meat browns slightly. Then add the bread crumbs and seasonings, stir until well mixed, and use in stuffing the lamb breast and onions.



U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
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WASHINGTON, D. C.

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THE MARKET BASKET

by

Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture

A RECORD GRAPEFRUIT CROP

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Two billion grapefruit will roll into market this winter, in boxes, crates, trucks, and tin cans. Even today, accustomed as we are to the figures of mass production, a total of two billion grapefruit is astonishing. Florida and Texas, the biggest producers of this record crop, have been picking grapefruit since the first of September. California and Arizona will begin early in November. So grapefruit is likely to be one of the best fruit buys of the whole winter season.

Two years ago a heavy freeze caught the grapefruit in Florida and Texas, ruining much of the crop. These trees have now recovered, and up to late October this year the groves have escaped both hurricanes and freezes. Also more trees have come into bearing during the last year or two to swell the estimated crop to nearly 28 million boxes, or approximately two billion individual fruits, according to estimates of the U. S. Department of Agriculture.

Grapefruit are no longer the bitter, thick-skinned, sometimes pithy fruit of the "gay nineties". The grapefruit of 1936 is juicier, tenderer, sweeter, as a result of the superior types which are now grown. The bitterness which formerly characterized much of the fruit has disappeared as a result of planting these better varieties. Since no one has yet produced a squirtless grapefruit, the pub-

lic has taken to grapefruit juice instead. Scientists, and others seeking for good qualities in grapefruit, in addition to selecting varieties that are more juicy and tender-fleshed, more resistant to disease, and better suited to transportation conditions, have also propagated seedless and pink-fleshed strains.

It is one of those happy coincidences of science that, just as the big grapefruit orchards were coming into bearing, nutritionists were discovering the role of vitamins in the human diet and the high potency of citrus fruit in this respect. Grapefruit, along with oranges and lemons, rate as excellent in vitamin C and as fair sources of B and G.

Also, in spite of its acid taste, grapefruit has not an acid but an alkaline reaction in the body.

For its vitamin C value alone, however, grapefruit would be an outstanding food. Each year brings more convincing evidence that our need for a daily, dependable, and generous supply of vitamin C is imperative. For the sake of variety, of course, we prefer to get our vitamin C from many foods. But get it we must, in regular and abundant quantities.

Unfortunately vitamin C is very sensitive to heat and to air, especially the two combined. So it is to the credit of the grapefruit that we usually eat it raw. And, know it or not, we are preserving not only flavor but vitamin C when we wait until the last minute before a meal to cut, core, and slip a sharp knife around the juicy sections. If you let the fruit stand with cut surfaces exposed to the air, it is surprising, the chemists say, how much of the vitamin C will be lost.



Broiled grapefruit therefore comes not as an invention of the vitamin experts. But the hostess on the lookout for the unusual finds it an interesting novelty. She welcomes it much as did the ladies of the 90's when they first set before their guests a grapefruit "au naturel", topped with a maraschino cherry.

It takes only a few minutes to broil grapefruit. Cut it in half, take out core and seeds, and prepare it as you would for immediate eating. Sprinkle generously with sugar, add a little butter if you wish for a richer flavor, and put into a hot broiling oven under the heating unit just as you would a steak or a chop. Have the heat high and in 10 or 15 minutes flecks of brown will appear on the fruit and it will be hot through and ready to serve.

Some like hot broiled grapefruit with the meat course. Some prefer it as an appetizer to start the meal, or a tart dessert for the finish. And some consider they start the day right with a hot broiled grapefruit for breakfast on a cold morning.

Of course broiling will never supplant the standard ways of serving grapefruit, both fresh and canned. For breakfast fruit or dinner appetizer, as a salad, or to give an agreeable touch of acidity to fruit cup or gelatin desserts, it is increasingly popular. Also because of the quantity of pectin in the thick rind, grapefruit is an excellent marmalade maker. It can be used alone to yield a clear, jelly-like product, or one grapefruit, one orange, and one lemon with sugar added is the basis of the famous "amber" marmalade. Jellied grapefruit peel, soft and tender on the inside and coated on the outside with crystals of sugar, is another delicious use. A postcard to the Bureau of Home Economics, U. S. Department of Agriculture, will bring directions for making amber marmalade or jellied grapefruit peel.

Putting grapefruit . . . into cans has widened its use. Now a considerable part of the less perfect fruit finds a ready market in canned form, as

sections or juice. U. S. Grades for canned grapefruit have been set up. Grades for the canned juice, both sweetened and unsweetened, are under consideration.

There are many beverage uses for the canned juice in punches, cocktails, and fruitades. Fresh grapefruit juice is also easy to serve because of the mechanical juicers on the market. Again mindful of the perishable nature of vitamin C, grapefruit juice should be squeezed only a short time before it is wanted, and canned juice should not be allowed to stand uncovered in the refrigerator after the can is opened.

When shopping for grapefruit, many of us wonder whether the color is real or artificial. Grapefruit is commonly not dyed, according to the Food and Drug authorities. If legally mature, it may be treated with ethylene gas, to remove green color and reveal the natural yellow color of the skin. The flavor is not affected by this process.

If you pick out grapefruit with thin skins and balance them in your hand, you will find that those heavy for their size usually have the most juice. Grapefruit of good quality is well-shaped, firm, but springy to the touch--not soft, wilted, or flabby. Judge odd-shaped fruit chiefly by weight. Those with pointed stem ends are troublesome to serve in halves. The discolored appearance of the outer skin known as "russeting" does not affect the flavor. But if there is even a small spot of decay, it will give an off-flavor throughout all the sections; so be wary of any soft spots in grapefruit.

